Literature and Psychology

The News Letter of the Conference on Literature and Psychology of the Modern Language Association

Chairman
Wayne Burns, University of Washington
Secretary
Carvel Collins, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Steering Committee
Leon Edel, New York University
William J. Griffin, Geo. Peabody College for Teachers
Editor—Leonard F. Manheim, 38 Fern Street, Floral Park, N. Y.

Vol. III November, 1953* No. 5

THE NOISE THAT TIMES MAKES

The Noise that Time makes in passing by
Is very slight but even you can hear it,
Having not necessarily to be near it,
Needing only the slightest will to try:

Hold the receiver of a telephone
To your ear when no one is talking on the line,
And what may at first sound to you like the whine
Of wind over distant wires is Time's own
Garments brushing against a windy cloud.

That same noise again, but not so well,
May be heard by taking a small cockle-shell
From the sand and holding it against your head;

Then you can hear Time's footsteps as they pass
Over the earth brushing the eternal grass.

--Merrill Moore

This is our third pre-convention issue. Our Conference will meet for the fourth time on an annual basis, since we have not yet achieved the status of a permanent Discussion Group. Under the rules for the conduct of conferences, we are once again presenting in advance the paper which will be the subject of our discussion. As usual, we are also presenting our annual Tentative Agenda.

Professor Collins' conference paper, "Are These Mandalas?" suggesting a possible relationship between certain aspects of Faulkner's writing and a fundamental configuration in the theories of Jung, supplements his previous paper on Faulkner and Freud and provides us for the first time with a starting point for discussion on the literary place and value of the tenets of the Zurich school. This gives promise of rich conversation which should extend far into the night, long after the termination of our formal meeting.

---

*The News Letter is made up at George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, and is distributed from that address.

In addition to our convention material, this issue will be devoted, as the epigraph suggests, to recent works of Dr. Merrill Moore, our guest at last year's Boston conference. We are particularly fortunate in having Dr. Moore's own account of the "psychogenesis" of "The Noise That Time Makes."

Subscribers and former members of the Conference are once again reminded that they must write to Professor Burns, announcing their intention to attend. MLA members will also be interested in the fact that the Editor has been invited to read a paper at the Discussion Group on Literature and Science on "Thanatos--the Death Instinct--in Dickens' Later Novels." The time and place will be found in the official MLA program.

Tentative Agenda of the FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY

To be held at the meeting of the Modern Language Association of America on Monday, December 28, 1953, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., Room 4, The Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois

1. Continuance of Organization

Question: Shall we continue the meetings of a group to discuss the inter-relationships between literature and psychology, in the form of an annual Conference, or, alternately, of a Discussion Group, if the latter is approved by the officers of MLA?

2. Permanent Organization

If it is the wish of those present, the chairman will entertain a motion that a nominating committee be appointed from those in attendance, to present a ticket for chairman, secretary, editor, and steering committee for 1954, for election by those in attendance at the close of the meeting.

3. Conference Paper

"Are These Mandalas?" - Presentation by Professor Carvel Collins, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, based on the mimeographed paper distributed before the Conference.

4. Discussion

Discussion from the floor based on Professor Collins' paper, contents of recent issues of LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY, and general topics, in the order named. Each speaker will be limited to four or five minutes in all. Members who cannot attend may submit brief statements which will be read or summarized by the Editor.

5. Recommendations

Shall LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY be continued? Are there any suggestions as to its future form and contents? Shall there be a specific topic for the next annual meeting, if any?

6. The Election

Slate to be presented by the nominating committee, if No. 2, above, is approved, or by nominations from the floor.

7. Adjournment

Officers for the 1953 meeting:

Chairman: Wayne Burns
Secretary: Carvel Collins
Editor: Leonard F. Manheim
Steering Committee: Leon Edel
William J. Griffin

ARE THESE MANDALAS?

A number of writers of fiction and poetry are said to have drawn on the works of Carl Jung. This in spite of the strong objections to Jung's theories voiced by many of the most effective students and practitioners of psychoanalysis, and often in spite of those writers' own objections to Jung's theories. One of the elements of Jung's thought which has attracted writers is his concept of the nature and function of the mandala. It seems to me that in the work of William Faulkner there are sections which might be related to this controversial matter, and I should like to present just two samples of them here as a basis for comment from the Literature and Psychology Conference at the 1953 Chicago meeting.

In such books as Psychological Types; Modern Man in Search of a Soul; The Secret of the Golden Flower; and The Integration of the Personality Jung suggests that the mandala pattern has significance as a symbol of (and adjunct to) the achievement of synthesis, of adjustment, of peace, of reconciliation between warring elements of the personality. Also, according to Jung, the mandala pattern accompanies or sometimes even helps to cause the feeling that the universe is "one" and existence is meaningful.

The essentials of Jung's many and scattered statements of his theories about the mandala are efficiently summarized at the beginning of Elizabeth Drew's discussion of Eliot's Four Quartets in her volume titled T. S. Elliot: The Design of His Poetry (New York: 1949), on pages 140-143. In her summary Miss Drew points out that to Jung the mandala pattern is part of "the process of 'transformation' which results in the integration of the personality" and that "Jung traces an apparently purposive sequence of images creating the gradual shift from the ego as the centre of being, to a different centre. It begins with the going down into the darkness, to the water, the mythical theme of the hero's journey under the sea or a lake....It means a meeting with the Shadow, actually the inner realities of a man's own unconscious, however it may be transposed into monsters and dragons and ordeals. It means a repudiation of the old practical guides of the ego, and the allowing of the ego to be object not subject; the experience of 'not doing.' The new centre of value will then reveal itself under the image of some form of enclosure, which to Jung has the meaning of the Greek temenos, an isolated sacred place; visualized in dream as garden, courtyard or such....More and more, dramatic figures as actors

cease to appear as symbols of the new centre, and it reveals itself as abstract pattern, in dream symbols of plastic design which bring extraordinary sensations of release, assurance and 'rightness.'

"What they bring is, according to Jung, the sense of wholeness of personality....Efforts to visualize the fleeting images in drawings take varied forms, but according to Jung, have always certain elements in the design which are constant. They are in the form of what he calls a mandala. He says that mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning magic circle, and that the basic design includes always a circle, having a centre....Jung asserts that the mandala dream image always combines the elements of a circular rotation (frequently of rotating light), some element of 'fourness,' and the all-important centre. Whereas in its consciously religious art-forms in West and East, the centre will have the figure of Christ or Buddha (generally within the design of rose or lotus), the secular unconscious seems generally to produce some natural symbolic emblem such as flower, sun, star, or pool of water."

Faulkner's long story "The Bear" (not his earlier shorter piece with that title but the one published during 1942 in Go Down, Moses and now most readily available in The Viking Portable Faulkner) seems to me to contain in its concluding pages the design of a text-book mandala.

The story has five numbered sections. The first three are set in the woods where we see the ritual of Ike McCaslin's initiation in the hunt under the guidance of the primitive half-Indian-half-Negro named Fathers. In the fourth section we see Ike's "civilized" plantation heritage and look into the future as he deals with this heritage and lives on to old age, the only adult white male hero in Faulkner's fiction whom the author seems to admire without reservation. The fifth and concluding section of the story takes us back to the woods where we see Ike, still a youth, visiting the burial place of Fathers and, in a scene containing the elements Jung ascribes to the mandala, having an impressive psychological experience, which we assume formed part of the foundation for the course of his subsequent years as they were described in the preceding section of the story.

Critics have said that the next-to-last section, with its account of Ike's plantation heritage, spoils the unity of an otherwise successful hunting story. But I think this remark suggests that these critics misread the whole work. To me one of the ways to read "The Bear" is as an account of Ike McCaslin's initiation into maturity. In this interpretation the fourth section concerning Ike's plantation background is essential, and the conclusion describes his successful adjustment of the conflict between this heritage and his forest training. It interests me that here Faulkner for the first time created a psychologically autobiographical character who was able to survive. In his earlier fiction the most psychologically autobiographical characters destroyed themselves, most notably Bayard Sartoris of Sartoris and Quentin Compson of The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! One of the major reasons for their self-destruction was their inability to make a working synthesis between their "civilized" heredity and the most primitive elements of life. In contrast to those earlier characters Ike McCaslin survives, because he is able to achieve this synthesis. "The Bear" emphasizes his achievement by placing it on the very concluding pages and by having given much of the long fourth section to demonstration of the life-long effects of that achievement.

The whole story of "The Bear" seems, like Moby Dick, Beowulf, Thorpe's "Big Bear of Arkansas," and other such literary works, to follow the pattern Jung presents in Miss Drew's statement which I condensed above. Faulkner's story of the ritualistic hunting and confrontation of a great beast includes all the classic elements: the ordeal, the plunge through water, and the repudiation of "the old practical guides." And at the conclusion of the story Ike's experience of unity and peace takes place in a setting which is to me disturbingly similar to the mandala pattern of which Jung makes so much and which he reports to be the culmination of such progresses as this story recounts.

In his eighteenth year, two years after the death of the bear and the dog Lion and the old hunter Sam Fathers, Ike visits the burial plot with its prominent four white corner posts. There he thinks about the dead and death. Then as he moves away from the four-cornered burial site toward the adjacent clearing he thinks about immortality and unity. He feels that the knoll is "no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam; not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression, and, being myriad, one...."

At this point he confronts a great rattlesnake, whom he addresses as a totem, calling it "Chief" and "Grandfather" in the Indian language he had learned from Fathers. Then he realizes that for some time he has been hearing a hammering sound coming from the adjacent clearing. This clearning, which the author earlier in the story specifically located precisely at the dividing line between the deforested land of "civilized" life and the primitive forest, contains a single large, isolated gum tree at its center--a tree of which the story earlier told us that one might trap "as many as a dozen squirrels in it" by stepping to its trunk and preventing their descent. Now as Ike emerges "from the woods, into the old clearing, with the solitary gum tree directly before him" he finds a hunting companion of his years of initiation seated at the base of the trunk hammering on a dismantled rifle while keeping a large number of squirrels in the tree, "forty or fifty of them leaping and darting from branch to branch until the whole tree had become one green maelstrom of mad leaves."

I take the episode on these concluding three or four pages to contain most of the elements which Jung ascribes to the mandala: an enclosed space, a central point, circular motion, a square (here the burial plot with its four white corner-markers which, if you will permit, seems to be psychologically moved into or at least toward the circle by the way in which the author presents Ike's realization that while standing inside the markers he has been unconsciously hearing for some time the hammering from the clearing), and feelings of unity and synthesis which Ike achieves here on the dividing line between the plantation land of his heredity and the virgin forest of his ritualistic initiation into manhood. The passage even contains a serpent as do many of the drawings of mandalas which Jung uses as illustrations in his books. (As some critics have pointed out to me, the serpent and the Garden of Eden may quite possibly be somewhat in Faulkner's mind here; but if so it may be useful to note that there seem to be those who regard the Bible's account of the Garden of Eden as a mandala!)

In the concluding scene of "The Bear" Faulkner draws somewhat on an actual episode which I have learned took place a number of years ago in a clearing during one of his annual deer hunts. But his detailed elaboration of the

episode and his placing it at the important concluding position in a story of this particular sort suggest more than a realistic report of an actual event.

"The Bear" throughout presents a great deal of evidence that Faulkner drew on reading of all sorts, ranging from fiction and poetry to ethnography and studies of folklore. And in this situation it is possible to assume that he need not have experienced mandalas himself but may only have drawn consciously on Jung or on some of Jung's sources for this episode which seems so closely modeled on the mandala. But much as I should like to, I have found no evidence that Faulkner ever studied Jung, nor have I found descriptions of mandalas in any of the books I so far know him to have read.

Among the other passages in his works which lead me to wonder whether Faulkner associates the design of the mandala with periods of serenity and adjustment in his characters is a passage in Sartoris (1929). Bayard Sartoris returns from the World War in considerable distress of personality. He resorts to violence of several kinds until he kills himself by testing an obviously defective aircraft. In Bayard's life of confused, compulsive conflict and self-destructive restlessness one of his temporary periods of peace comes in a scene which seems to me to have most of the elements attributed to the mandala design.

Bayard joins other men in drinking moonshine on a run-down farm. They drink in an enclosed glade about a central spring which is shaped by a presumably square wooden frame at the base of a single great tree. "The spring welled from the roots of the beech, into a wooden frame sunk to its top in white sand that quivered ceaselessly and delicately....The earth about the spring was trampled smooth and packed as an earthen floor. Near the spring a blackened iron pot sat on four bricks...." Bayard sat "against the bole of the beech tree. The rising slope of ground behind them hid the barn and the house" while "gnats whirled and spun in a leveling ray of sunlight, like erratic golden chaff." Bayard and the men "squatted in a small bowl of peacefulness remote from the world and time, and filled with the cool and limpid breathing of the spring and a seeping of sunlight among the elders and willows like a thinly diffused wine....Above the bowl where sunlight yet came in a leveling beam, gnats whirled and spun like dust-motes in a still, disused room."

But in this early book Faulkner is far from showing us a successfully adjusted character such as Ike McCaslin was to be in the later "Bear"; Bayard's feelings of peace by the spring at the center of the enclosed and secluded glade pass as he returns to town and continues on his path to self-destruction.

In other places in his works Faulkner uses the same motif, notable examples being in The Sound and the Fury and Light in August. But because of the lack of space I shall not describe them here, hoping that the two examples given above will be sufficient to provoke at our meeting a discussion of the validity of this sort of speculation in its numerous aspects, which the members of the Conference may variously consider to be productive or merely interesting, or risky and possibly wholly false.

--Carvel Collins
Department of Humanities
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Moore has most kindly sent us the following account of some of the origins and psychological overtones of the sonnet which we have used as our epigraph for this issue:

A Brief "Psychoanalysis" of "The Noise That Time Makes"

This poem was written about 1926 or a year before. When I wrote it, I had very little conscious awareness of the symbolism or meaning. Now on looking back, I see that it is a miniature psychoanalysis of my own personality.

It contains associations dating from early childhood and several stages in between. Also it represents a kind of wonder over sound as well as sight and the magic of the telephone (electricity) which I equate with the force of life.

The symbolism of the sea shell could be developed extensively as could also the pre-occupation with the theme of time. It is basic to my personality; time means to me time to live and the poem's reference to the passage of time refers to the swift passage of life.

The poem goes from the particular to the general by a posteriori thinking. From the specific, the essential is deduced.

It is my most popular and most quoted poem and more than any other, it has been pickled in the brine of anthologies, to use a phrase my friend, E. A. Robinson, used to use.

It was the title of my first volume published in 1929 and still people seem to like it. I even like it myself, for I feel that in it I expressed exactly what I meant to say except for one slip or defect--the use of the word "small" to describe shell. I meant small in a relative sense. Actually the cockle shell (genus Cardium or Cardita) would have to be fairly large to give out the sound of the sea children listen for in shells, but I learned that later when I acquired more information about the family of mollusks.

The very first line for example is associated in general to such phrases as "The Music of the Spheres" but actually in my own life I could tell a long and detailed anecdote about how these exact thoughts came into my mind. This would involve early memories about the first time I saw a locomotive and heard the hiss while letting off steam standing still; then starting, gaining momentum, etc., until it was running at full power with all the noise that the old fashioned coal-burning locomotive used to throw out.

Then it involves drawing, learning to represent pictures by lines made with a pencil on paper and other associations. Also into the poem have gone early memories of visits to the seashore, trips through the countryside and the sight of the sky, the horizon, sunsets, etc., all reduced by the process of condensation into the poem.

As I recall, the poem was written without much revision.

I could elaborate the associations in this poem almost endlessly, but I offer this as a point of departure.

- - - - - - - - - -

We have also received a letter from our distinguished member, Dr. S. I. Hayakawa, calling attention to the interest that his publication ETC, the Journal of the International Society for Semantics, has in receiving articles such as our members might write:

"...we are interested in ETC. in topics which the New Critics have expelled from literary criticism--such considerations as the insight a literary work gives into the life of the poet, or the effect a poem is likely to have on the attitudes or actions of the reader, or the semantic (or psychosemantic) analysis of characters or plot in a novel or play, etc. Roughly speaking the direction of our interest can be indicated in the cliché 'literature and life.'"

BIBLIOGRAPHY (XII)

There is no better account of the unique place in contemporary American letters that is filled by Merrill Moore than

Henry W. Wells, "Poet and Psychiatrist: Merrill Moore," The Hopkins Review, Vol. VI, No. 1 (Fall, 1952), in the series "Modern Southern Literature: A Symposium - IX."

After making the cogent point that "Moore's sonnets...contradict many, though not all, the requirements commonly fulfilled by modern verse," that we "must accustom ourselves through some repetition to have symbols presented more in terms of the psychologist than of the linguist," Dr. Wells goes on to evaluate the peculiar position of the physician as poet:

> Doctor Moore is at present the leading scientist in America writing verse of any consequence. Doctor William Carlos Williams is a poet at least of wider repute but not a scientist of greater repute. Only occasionally does Doctor Williams use his medical experience as subject matter for his poetry; actually, so far as we are allowed to see, Williams the physician goes one way, Williams the poet another. But Moore, creative in both fields, is much more clearly a single personality, whether working as an authority in psychiatry, in problems of alcoholism, drug mania and venereal disease, or in the writing of poetry. His "portrait sonnets," for example, are character analyses; his poetic imaginings resemble the hypotheses of science; his many scientific papers not infrequently have the breadth, the warmth, the human understanding of the artist. To Moore, poetry is not exclusively an affair of words, nor the practice of medicine wholly a transaction in exact technical knowledge. A distant heir of both Leonardo and Theophrastus, he sees imaginative literature and science as practical allies, not, as Eliot, Ransom and Tate so often describe them, antithetical. Pedantry, Moore presumes, is possible on either side; indeed, it becomes inevitable unless some harmony is attained between the two approaches to

to life. His poetry is designed to avoid equally the pedantry of numbers and of words....

> From his earliest years as a poet Moore realized the common ground between poet and psychiatrist, each a scholar of the soul and of the human personality. He showed a lively interest in almost all the sciences: striking and original sonnets are to be found with subject matter from astronomy, geology, botany, physics, chemistry, engineering, and, above all, psychology. He composes intellectual sonnets analyzing mind, soul and heart. He studies fear, hope, depression, passion, sex, sexual mores, and various illusions, those of alcoholism and drugs being conspicuous. With a psychologist's insight, he examines childhood and old age. With a doctor's realism, he broods on morbidity and death.

Surely there is no living American writer who personifies and represents so completely, by precept and example, the very synthesis that we, in our small way, have been attempting in this journal. For so prolific a writer, however, we can do no more than list a few of his more recent works.

The clinical associate in psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School and visiting neurologist at the Boston City Hospital may be represented by

> "Sex and Adolescence," Harvard Medical Alumni Bulletin, October, 1952;
>
> "Deaths from Poisoning" (with Drs. Leo Alexander and Johannes Ipsen, Jr.), New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 246:46-52 (January 10, 1952);
>
> "Prevalence of Alcoholism in the Population and Among Suicides and Accidents from Poisoning, Masaachusetts, 1938-1948" (also with Drs. Alexander and Ipsen), Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Vol. 13:204-214 (June, 1952).

In the first article listed, the practicing teacher of early or late adolescents might learn much about meeting his students on their own "literary" ground; for example,

> The individual everywhere has to meet two important demands (they are related, of course): one is the demand of the community that he earn a living; the other is the social expectation he places on himself. Maybe the savage in the song, "Civilization" (Bongo, bongo, bongo...) by Hilliard-Sigman, was right when he didn't want to leave the Congo. In this manner, the words of certain popular songs contain recognition of important social and psychologic problems. Especially popular in adolescent circles, among "teen-agers" and the "bobby-sox crowd" are such songs as "Accentuate the Positive" (as sung by Bing Crosby), "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries," and "Dancing in the Dark." It is often through such means that certain adolescents gain their first awareness of general psychologic and philosophic orientation, in words amenable to their own system of meanings and in symbols they can accept and understand.

The former student of Professor Ransom, the ex-"Fugitive," the most prolific sonneteer in literary history, may stand upon his four most recently published works (M: 1000 Autobiographical Sonnets being now out of print):

Case Record from a Sonnetorium, New York, 1951 (with illustrations by Edward St. John Gorey and comments by Louis Untermeyer, John Crowe Ransom, Henry W. Wells, and William Carlos Williams);

Illegitimate Sonnets, New York, 1950 (reprinting some sonnets from earlier books that are now out of print);

Clinical Sonnets, New York, 1949, 50, 52, 53 (illustrated by Gorey);

More Clinical Sonnets, New York, 1953 (also illustrated by Gorey).

The Gorey illustrations will someday cause his name to be coupled with Moore's as Phiz's is with Dickens'. (Note the remarkable fact that a book of poetry has had four printings in five years!) In the Case Record the cartoons do not illustrate the sonnets printed beneath them but constitute a "comic-book" type of sequence in which the medically-clothed doctor holds a series of therapeutic sessions with his laurel-crowned and very meagrely clad "double." We recommend "The Sonnet Doctor Approaches Wyatt and Surrey." The Case Record opens with a priceless series of epigraphs, including among them a quotation from Clarissa Rinaker's article, referred to in Bibliography (VII), Vol. II, No. 3, page 7.

A final note: Dr. Moore has joined the company of Eliot, Auden, Spender, MacLeish, et al. in recording some of the Clinical and Illegitimate Sonnets for the Harvard Vocarium--Spoken Literature, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1951.

- - - - - - - - - - - -

We call attention to the most recent work of one of our subscriber-members,

Arthur Wormhoudt, The Muse at Length, A Psychoanalytical Study of the Odyssey (Boston, 1953).

Dr. Wormhoudt contends that "The Odyssey brilliantly substantiates Dr. Edmund Bergler's theory, based on clinical experience, that works of art represent unconscious defenses against reproaches of conscience leveled at the passivity of psychic masochism."

Additions to and Changes in Subscription List as of November 28

Nelson G. Hanawalt, Dept. of Psychology, New Jersey College for Women, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
M. Krich, 300 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York.

Changes in Address:

Martha Bradshaw, Dept. of English, Brooklyn College, New York (R. 501 West 113th Street, New York 25, N. Y.).
Wayne Burns, Dept. of English, University of Washington (R: 11332 Riviera Place, N. E., Seattle 55, Washington).
N. Bryllion Fagin, Dept. of English, University of Rochester, N. Y.
Eleanor L. Nicholes, The Pforzheimer Library, Purchase, New York (R: 220 East 73rd Street, New York 21, New York).

We end this year and volume with 95 subscribers (5 short of our goal), including 4 libraries, and with our 1951 and 1952 leading articles and bibliographies in print.